

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Edgemont School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** September 16-17, 2002

**Date of Report:** September 20, 2002

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Maintenance</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Surveys/Referrals
- Comprehensive Plan
- Publications
- Word of Mouth
- Handbook

- Child Count
- Student Files
- IEPs
- Policies/Procedures
- Inservice Information
- Pre-referral Team Process
- Interagency Agreements
- Parent Rights
- Budget Issues
- Out of District Placement Data
- SIMS
- Graduation Rate
- Drop Out Rate
- State Testing

### **Promising Practice**

The steering committee concluded that the Edgemont School District uses data-based decision making procedures to review and analyze student growth. The district uses the SAT 9 information and has established a review team.

### **Maintenance**

The Edgemont district has in place appropriate procedures for child find. The school has policies and procedures in place to work with placement agencies to ensure quality service for student growth for out of district placements. The district has assessment teams in place to evaluate and assess student progress.

### **Needs Improvement**

The steering committee concluded that Edgemont School District needs to develop an improvement plan that addresses specific policies, procedures and practices to ensure compliance with IDEA and ensure appropriate education opportunities for all students. Edgemont needs to develop training procedures for all staff working with children, and develop a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). Edgemont School District needs to ensure out of district placements are included in the state's testing requirements.

### **Out of Compliance**

The Edgemont district steering committee concluded that they do not follow an effective pre-referral system.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising Practices**

The review team found the data based decision making procedures to review and analyze student growth to be a promising practice. Grades 1 through 11 are tested each year. A team looks at the scores to determine areas of student performance improvement. A World history class was added at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level because of this procedure.

## **Maintenance**

The review team agrees with all areas of maintenance for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Needs Improvement**

The review team found, based on file reviews, that IEP teams lack an evaluator or someone knowledgeable about the evaluations. Because of this possibly 3 students were found eligible through an IEP team override without following administrative rules pertaining to the IEP team override.

## **Out of compliance**

### Issues requiring immediate attention

One student had an IEP due on September 17, 2002 and a three-year reevaluation due on September 20, 2002. Neither of these was scheduled to meet by the needed timelines.

The students were found to be eligible students with disabilities through the IEP team override process. However, the process defined in 24:05:24.01:31 was not followed by district staff.

### 24:05:24.01:31. IEP team override.

If the IEP team determines that a student is eligible for special education or special education and related services because the student has a disability and needs special education even though the student does not meet specific requirements in this chapter, the IEP team must include documentation in the record as follows:

- (1) The record must contain documents that explain why the standards and procedures that are used with the majority of students resulted in invalid findings for this student;
- (2) The record must indicate what objective data were used to conclude that the student has a disability and is in need of special education. These data may include test scores, work products, self-reports, teacher comments, previous tests, observational data, and other developmental data;
- (3) Since the eligibility decision is based on a synthesis of multiple data and not all data are equally valid, the team must indicate which data had the greatest relative importance for the eligibility decision; and
- (4) The IEP team override decision must include a sign-off by the IEP team members agreeing to the override decision. If one or more IEP team members disagree with the override decision, the record must include a statement of why they disagree signed by those members.

The district director of special education shall keep a list of students on whom the IEP team override criteria were used to assist the state in evaluating the adequacy of student identification criteria.

### 24:05:16:16.01. Paraprofessionals and assistants

Through interviews, the monitoring team found the district has not trained paraprofessionals who are working with special needs students. The comprehensive plan for the Edgemont district states on page 87 that the paraprofessionals will have training 2 times a year. This training has never been offered to the paraprofessionals. Two of the paraprofessionals have never seen the IEPs for students they are working with including goals, objectives and modifications.

### 24:05:24. Referral Procedures

The review team found all referrals are not documented, only one written referral was found for students 7-12.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- IEP/Student File
- Comprehensive Plan
- Child Count
- SIMS
- Budget/Special Education
- Flow Through Funds
- Discipline File
- Attendance Program
- Special Education Gradebooks
- Administrative Policies
- Handbook

#### **Maintenance**

Edgemont School District has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure all students are receiving a free and appropriate education

### **Validation Results**

#### **Maintenance**

The review team agrees with all areas of maintenance for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3-Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- IEPs
- File Reviews
- Teacher Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Evaluations
- Prior Notice for Evaluation
- State Criteria, Forms and Procedures
- Exit- Re-entry into Special Education
- MDT's

### **Maintenance**

Edgemont School District has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that all students participate in appropriate evaluations. The district completes valid and reliable evaluations.

### **Needs Improvement**

Edgemont School District needs to ensure that parental input is sought and received in the evaluation process for all students (elementary needed improvement).

## **Validation Results**

### **Maintenance**

The review team agrees with all areas of maintenance for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Out of compliance**

#### **24:05:04:02. Determination of needed evaluation data**

A team of individuals, including input from the student's parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs. Through interviews and file reviews with staff the review team concluded that the district does not implement a procedure for documenting parental input. Evidence of parent involvement into the evaluation process was not available in a review of 13/15 student records.

Through fourteen file reviews and interviews, the review team found no evidence of parental input into the evaluation process.

#### **24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures**

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child. This is to include information provided by parents that may assist in determining whether the child is a child with a disability and the content of the child's IEP.

Six of the fifteen files reviewed showed no functional assessment in the evaluation process. Nine of the other files showed functional assessments being done, but the skills were not specific and they were not carried over into the present levels of performance.

Transition assessments were not completed for eligible students. There were no types of assessments that would assist with determining the student's interest area, interest inventory, independent living checklists, etc.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- IEP/Student Files
- Comprehensive Plan
- Parental Rights Document
- Surveys
- File Reviews
- IEP Forms
- Child Count
- SIMS
- Budget/Special Education

#### **Maintenance**

The district has policies and procedures to ensure confidentiality and appropriate access to all files. Independent education evaluations are considered for special education placement to meet student needs. The district follows the policies it has established for complaints and due process hearings.

#### **Needs improvement**

Edgemont School District needs to develop a policy regarding destruction of special education records and informing parent/adult students.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Maintenance**

The review team agrees with all areas of maintenance for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Needs improvement**

The team was unable to validate the need for a policy regarding destruction of special education records. Edgemont's comprehensive plan shows a policy in place on page 53.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- IEP
- File Reviews
- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Personal Information

### **Maintenance**

The Edgemont School District has procedures and policies for Special Education staff to ensure the requirements of the IEP are met. The District has procedures in place to work with birth to 3 to ensure a smooth transition for pre-school children. File reviews indicate that the district collaborates with public and private agencies for student services.

### **Needs improvement**

Present levels of performance need to clearly identify how the student's disability affects the student's progress in the general curriculum.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Needs improvement**

When counseling is listed as a related service there must be goals and objectives to support the decision. Edgemont had a student receiving counseling without goals and objectives.

#### **Out of compliance**

24:05:27:01:03 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In 12/15 files reviewed present levels of performance were not linked to evaluation and were not skill specific. Present levels of performance were vague. For example, "Math reasoning, numerical operations, reading comprehension". Present

levels of performance for students in the area of transition were not found. In four files of students with a specific learning disability and related services of speech and Occupational Therapy, there were two separate present levels of performance; one for speech and one for learning disabilities with no mention of Occupational Therapy. Ten of fifteen files reviewed showed no information about how the disability of the student affects their involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

For each student beginning at age 14, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. For each student beginning at age sixteen a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Through interview and file reviews the review team found transition evaluation was not administered for students approaching transition age, in order to design an outcome oriented process which promotes movement from school to post-secondary school activities. Transition activities were addressed but were not tied to current present levels of performance and evaluation. Life planning outcomes are required at age 14. Under "employment," two files listed the same outcome- "plans on entering the world of competitive employment as an adult." There was no specific job the student wanted to pursue listed. There is no documentation of outside agencies being invited to the IEP meetings for students 16 and older.

In determining what modifications would be needed for state/district wide assessments, the IEP contained a list of modifications that did not correlate with how the student would be tested on a regular basis or the testing modifications required by the student to benefit from the program. Three students were identified to have the tests read orally, when their IEPs showed no indication of a reading disability.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Budget Information
- IEP
- Surveys
- Child Count
- Personnel Information
- OSE Information
- Monitoring Report
- Placement Data by Age
- File Reviews

### **Maintenance**



Edgemont has policies and procedures in place to support least restricted environment.

**Needs Improvement**

Edgemont School District needs to develop opportunities for all students to be educated and access the general curriculum in the regular classroom when appropriate.

**Validation Results**

**Needs Improvement**

The IEP team must provide a written description of the options considered and the reasons why those options were rejected for each placement alternative considered for the student. The Edgemont district does not consistently use the “accept/reject” format for their justification statements.